



How to Read Your Own Birth Chart – Astrology Lesson 10



(This is a comprehensive lesson. If you prefer, see instead [4 Easy Birth Chart Reading Techniques For Beginners](#).)

(Get your free birth chart and report [here](#).)

The most important thing to remember while interpreting any birth chart is: **synthesis**. The entire chart must be taken as a whole. A natal chart abounds with bits and pieces of information about an individual. Each separate bit must be synthesized into one whole picture of the person.

This means that you cannot take one piece of the chart (for example, Mercury in Sagittarius) and decide that it defines the entire person. If you do that, you will, undoubtedly, be in error. Of course, you will be tempted to stop at one or another of the planetary meanings, and think that it is the defining factor of a person. This is a big mistake. For example, say that two individuals both have Mercury in Sagittarius (denoting something of a "big mouth"). You may be tempted to assume that both of the individuals are "outspoken." But, say the first person has the Sun in Capricorn, while the second person has the Sun in Sagittarius. While they both have Mercury in Sagittarius, the first person (Sun in Capricorn) will have a much more reserved communication style than the second person (Sun in Sagittarius).

The point, again (and this point will be repeated often), is that the entire chart must be blended together. Yes, by all means, go ahead and see all the separate interpretations of each planet in its sign and house. But then you must **weave it all together**, and lace it with the Rising Sign, to get an accurate picture.

It's as if each of us is a mosaic, made up of tiny individual images. In the birth chart, each separate planet in a sign and house is like one tiny individual image, one tiny part of the whole mosaic. Now, two different completed mosaics, if you look close enough, may contain tiny pieces that are exactly the same, yet they are part of two completely different finished mosaics (this point is illustrated by the example of Mercury in Sagittarius above). Although the mosaics contain similar pieces, the final products look nothing alike. So what we're saying here is the **opposite** of that age-old adage: "Don't judge a book by its cover." The opposite is "Don't judge a book by a single page inside." The

work of the astrologer, then, is to take all the bits and pieces of insight in the birth chart and synthesize them into a whole. What emerges is an amazingly accurate portrait of an individual.

Interpreting Planets in the Signs

Look at the birth chart and take note of what sign and house each planet is in. (Check here if you need help remembering what the [symbols/glyphs](#) mean.) Here is a handy, [printable worksheet](#) that will help you keep track of your birth chart information. Also take note of the Ascendant's sign (Rising Sign), and which house the Ascendant's ruler occupies.

Now you can look up the "Chart Interpretations" of each of your planets and Rising Sign. The [Chart Interpretations](#) on the linked page are only **general** meanings of what each item represents. As you get a feel for the basic energy of each planet, and of the qualities of each sign, you can add your own insight.

The zodiac sign will show **how** the planet is manifested. Previously, we likened the signs to "stained-glass windows" through which the planet is expressed. See if this analogy helps: envision a sentence, with a "verb" and an "adverb." The planet is the "verb" while the zodiac sign is the "adverb." For example, the Moon (*feel, nurture, respond*) in the sign of Capricorn (*reservedly, coldly*) denotes someone who nurtures in a cold and reserved way, or has trouble expressing emotions. That's not a happy placement for the Moon, but remember: there's more to the story...the rest of the chart. (See what each planet means in Lesson 5: [The Planets](#). See what each zodiac sign means in Lesson 8: [Zodiac Signs](#))

Incorporating the Astrological Houses

The other thing to remember is that the planet in the sign will focus on the **House**. This means that the activity denoted by the planet will take place in the arena of your life designated by the House in which that planet falls. (Remember, each House represents a sphere of life – i.e. work, home, friendships, etc.) The planet is the "what," the sign is "how" that "what" is done, and the House is "where" it takes place. Here is a handy reminder to use when interpreting your natal chart:

Planets = What?
Signs = How?
Houses = Where?

The following table explains it further.

Planets = “What” = energies; what you like to do
Signs = “How” = the way you do it
Houses = “Where” = areas of your life

An example of why taking the House into consideration is so important:

Say a person has Saturn in Capricorn in the 7th House, which could manifest as a reserved (Capricorn) attitude in love relationships (7th House). Then, say this same individual has Venus in Sagittarius in the 11th House. This person will be friendly and outgoing (Sagittarius) in social situations and groups (11th House), but unemotional and detached (although dependable) in love relationships (Saturn in Capricorn in the 7th). *(Astrology is a powerful tool for understanding those seemingly contradicting tendencies that we all have. The birth chart tells it all. With time and patience, you will be able to read all such details from a birth chart)*

House Rulers (Signs on the Cusps)

Another influence on each **House** (in each department of life) is the **ruling planet** of the House. The ruling planet of each House in your natal chart is the planet that rules the sign on the cusp. For example, if you have Capricorn on the 7th House cusp, then Saturn is the Ruler of your 7th House, because Saturn rules Capricorn. The result is that Saturn will have an influence in the matters of your 7th House, regardless of which House Saturn is actually residing in. (Here is a table of the [Sign Rulerships](#)). The sign on each house cusp shows one's **attitude** towards the matters of that house, whereas planets in the house show actual **circumstances**. For example, Capricorn on the 7th House cusp denotes an attitude of reserve or caution towards forming partnerships. On the other hand, Saturn in the 7th house may denote actual problems transpiring in partnerships and in marriage. These are subtle differences that will perfect your interpretations when reading a birth chart.

So a House is influenced by any planets residing in that House, but also by the ruler of the House. Most of the time, the ruler will be in a different House. Many times, the goods of the House will be used for advantage in the House where the planetary ruler actually resides. For example, say you have Capricorn on the 7th House cusp, and Saturn (Capricorn's ruler) in the 2nd House. You may very well choose to marry (7th House) for money (ruler in 2nd House). This last statement brings us to our next point – **a word of caution**.

A Word of Caution

The celestial configuration that took place at your moment of birth is a powerful indicator of your motivations, drives, preferences, and psychological makeup, but it does **not** seal your fate. It **does** show the potential you were born with, but what you **do** with that potential is up to you.

Some astrologers mistakenly interpret birth charts by declaring the **outcomes** of the drives, or the external circumstances. They declare things that *must* definitively take place. But the correct way to interpret a birth chart is to declare the drives, strengths, weaknesses, preferences, needs, tendencies, and so forth. Astrology reveals our inner psychological makeup. The **outcomes** are for the individual to manifest for him/herself. For example, above it was mentioned that if you have Capricorn ruling your 7th House, and Saturn in the 2nd House, then you might marry for money. But the proper way to read that example is to declare that you "have a need for security in your relationships. You have a need for security, but it does not necessarily mean that you will marry for money. You may very well choose to marry a pauper for true love. But be assured that your need for material security in relationships (as shown in your birth chart) will continue as a nagging feeling you won't easily be rid of."

The natal chart never lies. The problem is when the natal chart is read incorrectly. Remember, instead of giving predestined predictions, you will be more precise to explain the potential. People choose what to do with their potential. As Henley wrote,

I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul."

The natal chart is one's map.

Here is another example, taken from history. Ancient astrologers, before psychology was popular, interpreted charts in a more fatalistic manner. If you were a Pisces, they would say that you would end up living in poverty (the "starving artist" stereotype) because you were such a "weakling". Modern astrologers understand the deeper psychological drives and needs that are represented by the planets and signs. Nowadays, we understand that Pisces has a need to transcend the mundane, and while he is very artistic, he is not fated to live in poverty. Pisces simply does not prioritize money or materials. He could be poor, or he could be rich. Either way, the Pisces will prioritize the intangible over the tangible – which is how we interpret it today. The interpretation shifted from a predetermined fate (poverty), to a psychological drive (need for artistic/spiritual transcendence) that may result in any circumstantial fate.

Remembering Aspects

Don't forget the [aspects](#). If you attempt to make an interpretation without considering the aspects, you will be in error. Interpretations for each planet in sign and house must be modified according to the nature of the aspects.

Aspects can soften things and bring **ease** to otherwise troublesome planetary placements, or they can bring **conflict** to otherwise pleasant planetary placements. Aspects stimulate the planets.

Every planet has both easy and difficult (or positive and negative) manifestations. For example, the sun's energy can be expressed as a generous pouring forth of self and creativity, or prideful arrogance and an excessive desire to be special. Aspects from other planets tell whether the energies will be expressed easily and positively (if it receives trines & sextiles), or with struggle and conflict (if it receives squares or oppositions). Again, a birth chart interpretation without accounting for aspects is incorrect, or at least incomplete. (See [Lesson 9: Aspects in Astrology](#).)

Most important aspects to look for:

Take immediate notice of conjunctions to any of the four angles (this means conjunctions to the Ascendant, M.C., Descendant, I.C.). When a planet makes a conjunction to one of the angles, the influence of that planet may be the strongest influence in the chart. The person will identify very strongly with the traits of that planet. This is explained in detail in: [The Meaning of a Planet in Conjunction To 1 of Your Angles](#).

Also take notice of conjunctions made by the outer planets (Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto) to the inner planets (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, and Mars). These conjunctions will drastically alter the interpretation for the inner planet by adding its own qualities. A conjunction from Uranus adds rebelliousness and innovation; a conjunction from Neptune adds confusion or sadness and/or inspiration and magic, and a conjunction from Pluto adds power, but can be a bit creepy.

For example, a Leo-Sun person who has Pluto making a conjunction aspect with their Sun will be very Plutonian. This person would be one of the most silent and secretive Leos ever.

Balance of Elements and Qualities

Another thing to note is the balance of elements and qualities in the chart. If you feel overwhelmed with all this new information, then you should simply try this step first. This is the easiest interpretation that can be derived from a natal chart, even for inexperienced people. This is how it's done:

Note the element of the sign of each planet, and that of the ascendant, and of the midheaven. This [printable worksheet](#) will help you. Then simply count how many are fire, air, Earth, and water. Count the Sun's and the Moon's element for 2 each, because they are such a strong influence. It's common to have a combination of elements, say 3 or 4 of each. However, should you find an imbalance, such as 5 or more of an element, or 0 to 1 of an element, this will say something about the overall temperament of the individual. Five or more of one element will make that the "Predominant Element" in the individual. It is interesting to note that the Predominant Element may be different from that of the Sun sign. In this case, the person will behave even less like their Sun sign – yet another reason why we cannot define a person simply by their Sun sign. If a chart is completely lacking in an element, or if there is only 1 planet in an element, that will be considered the "Weakest Element." The "General Interpretations" on the following page will include interpretations for [Predominant and Weakest Elements](#).

The same method is used to tally up the [balance of qualities](#) (Cardinal, Fixed, Mutable) of each planet, ascendant, and midheaven. This gives only subtle information, unless you find a great imbalance, such as a complete lack of one

quality, or 6 or more of one quality. This [printable worksheet](#) will help you.

If you have your worksheet filled in with all the signs and houses of your planets, **continue to [Chart Interpretations](#) to help you interpret your own birth chart.**

Next Lesson: [Relationship Astrology – Introduction](#) »

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